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INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L KHARTOUM 001848

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DEPARTMENT FOR AF/SPG, NEA/RA, NEA/IPA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/26/2017

TAGS: AMGT KPAL KWBG PGOV PREL IS SU

SUBJECT: IN "HISTORIC SHIFT", SUDAN AGREES TO ATTEND
ANNAPOLIS CONFERENCE

REF: A. KHARTOUM 1827

1B. STATE 158852

Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1 (C) Presidential Advisor Dr. Mustafa Othman Ismail notified CDA Fernandez on November 26 that Sudan, in a historic policy shift, has agreed to attend the Annapolis Conference. MFA Protocol subsequently confirmed to Charge that the Foreign Ministry was accepting the State Department's suggestion and instructing their Charge in Washington, Ambassador John Ukec Lueth Ukec, to represent Sudan since time would not allow a more senior official to be present.

12. (C) Ismail noted that this decision was "a historic policy shift" for Sudan since the country has steadfastly refused to ever attend any international meeting with Israel. He added that the decision will make some hardliners in the country very unhappy, even if it is only a symbolic presence. CDA noted that with Syria and Saudi Arabia attending, perhaps this would be less of a problem for Sudan. Ismail responded that Sudan was taking this step to show that it wants to be considered a responsible partner with the international community, and especially the United States, for peace and stability. CDA Fernandez responded that we were appreciative of this decision, but that, in the Sudanese context, progress on Darfur and CPA implementation were even more important.

13. (C) Comment: While this is a small positive step (which may indeed loom large in some radical Sudanese minds), this decision shows a common disconnect in Sudanese strategic thinking that believes that "progress" on some issues such as peace in the Middle East or counter-terrorism somehow obviates the need for greater Sudanese Government action on issues where they are indeed central players, such as ending the crisis in Darfur or full implementation of the fragile Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between North and South. End comment.

FERNANDEZ